

the movies

Louise
Snider**'Zany 'Night Shift'
propels a nebbish
into fast-paced life**

"Night Shift" (R) is a sleeper, and I don't mean dull. It's unexpectedly lively and funny.

It slipped into town with no hoopla or fanfare, none of the multi-million-dollar hype that has become almost ordinary. On the surface, it wouldn't seem to merit much hoopla.

It stars Henry Winkler whose previous movies haven't been blockbusters and who is getting a bit mature to still be playing "the Fonz" on "Happy Days." It was directed by Ron Howard, also of the "Happy Days" gang. What? Howard, a director? And it was written by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel. Don't ask me who they are.

So this is a movie you go to without any terrific expectations. That, of course, added to the pleasure of discovering this nifty, little, unprepossessing movie. Not the greatest thing since sprockets were punched into film, but not bad.

WINKLER DEVELOPS a character totally opposite from his television role. Charles Lumley is a spineless, neurotic, sweet nebbish. He can't handle any stressful situation. He is easily intimidated. He is always on the receiving end of every insult life has to offer.

He can't walk to his apartment without a vicious dog chasing him. A blind musician harasses him. The neighborhood restaurant never gets his order right. His girlfriend (Gina Hecht) is more interested in losing weight than making love, and the only thing that interests her more than losing weight is eating a Nestle Crunch.

Chuck works the night shift at the city morgue. It's a nice quiet job, or it would be except for Billy Blaze (Michael Keaton), the new man hired to work with Chuck.

Billy is the opposite of Chuck. He's a brash, fast-talking human dynamo. He also is "an idea man," and one of his ideas proves to be wildly successful. He convinces Chuck of the advantages of running a call-girl operation from the morgue.

Chuck handles the incoming calls and manages the money. Billy chauffeurs the women to their destinations.

THERE ARE complications, however. Chuck falls for one of the girls, Belinda (Shelley Long), and suffers guilt pangs because he is still engaged. He worries about the morality of being a "love broker." And last but not least, some muscle-men are after Chuck and Billy for not cutting in the local racket boss on their operation.

The comedy does lose some of its sparkle in the last half, but it is still a little gem. The humor is bright and clever, with more than a hint of Woody Allen in the neurotic character of Chuck. Keaton as the crazy extrovert Billy is a perfect foil for Winkler's Chuck, and Shelley Long is both sexy and sweet as the prostitute and Chuck's lover.

Because of the plot, it's important to point out that "Night Shift" is not a sleazy movie. It is not sexy, and it is not filled with nudity or bad language. It's just whacky, inventive and a lot of fun.

**what's at
the movies**

ANNIE (PG). The successful Broadway musical is expanded and brought to the screen by director John Huston, with talented Aileen Quinn as Annie and Albert Finney and Carol Burnett.

THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS (R). Burt Reynolds is Sheriff Ed Earl and Dolly Parton the whorehouse madam in musical comedy based on the Broadway hit.

BLADE RUNNER (R). Harrison Ford is a detective hunting four defective human replicants who have become killers. Set in Los Angeles in the year 2020.

DINER (R). Comedy drama set in 1959 about five friends and their difficult transition into manhood.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (PG). Steven Spielberg's best film yet, and probably the best film of the year, develops story of an alien being stranded on earth and befriended by a young boy.

FORCED VENGEANCE (R). Action film set in Hong Kong with Chuck Norris who gets involved

in protecting honest casino owners from underworld takeover.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S SEX COMEDY (PG). Woody Allen's period comedy about three couples spending a weekend in the country. Beautifully photographed movie, but story doesn't measure up.

NIGHT SHIFT (R). A mixture of broad humor and human comedy centering on friendship of two average New Yorkers who come up with a one-in-a-million scheme to strike it rich. Stars Henry Winkler, Michael Keaton and Shelley Long. Directed by Ron Howard.

AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN (R). Richard Gere and Debra Winger in gritty love story about a loner trying to rise above his seamy past and become a naval aviation officer.

THE PIRATE MOVIE (PG). Send-up of buccaneer movies features Kristy McNichol and Christopher Atkins in comedy with original music. Based on Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pirates of Penzance."

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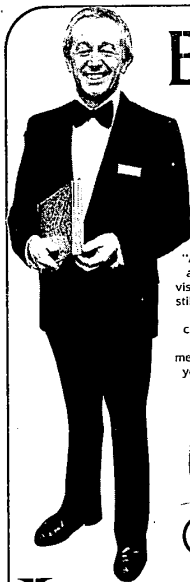
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